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Contact: Robin Winchell (202) 225-4031

WASHINGTON, DC- U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon today announced that Plaquemines Parish will receive \$3,978,603.54 in federal disaster aid grants from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The grants will reimburse the Parish for debris removal and rebuilding costs at the Davant Community Center for damaged caused by Hurricane Katrina.

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"Until it was all but destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, the Davant Community Center had provided recreation facilities for the citizens of Plaquemines Parish for over 40 years," Rep. Melancon said.

"This rebuilding grant will help revitalize the community and make sure that once again, families have a place to meet and socialize with their neighbors."

The following federal grants were announced today:

- **\$1,521,995.49 to rebuild and repair the severely damaged Davant Community Center (Plaquemines Parish).** On Aug. 29, 2005, high winds, storm surge and flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina damaged the Davant Community Center that has been a part of the community since it was built in the 1960s. The complex consisted of several recreation facilities: the main building, the pool area with a pool house, a concession stand, an outdoor basketball court, as well as a baseball field. All facilities will be rebuilt, except for the pool and pool house, which will be repaired.

- **\$2,456,608.05 for debris removal and cleanup following Hurricane Katrina (Plaquemines Parish).** The storm's strong winds and the rushing water from the levee breaks tore down trees and extensively damaged property in Plaquemines Parish. The debris was then deposited along the parish waterway system, presenting serious health and safety hazards. This grant will reimburse the parish for removing the debris, which was completed prior to June 30, 2006. A previous version of this grant was based on estimated costs and did not provide adequate reimbursement to the parish. The revised version announced today is based on the actual cost to the Parish for the project and also includes extra funding for the removal of an additional 25,144 cubic yards of submerged debris not identified during initial inspections.

"Federal grants such as these have helped us with the initial storm cleanup and moved us closer to rebuilding our vibrant communities," said Rep. Melancon. "However, there is still much to be done to ensure that our parishes, hometowns, and families fully recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The funding and provisions included in the Iraq/Katrina Supplemental bill - which was passed last month -- will bring us a long way in helping the many communities in south Louisiana still struggling to rebuild and I will keep advocating for them in Washington to make sure all of their needs are met."

Rep. Melancon has worked in Congress to further reduce the financial burden on local governments in south Louisiana still struggling to recover from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Most recently, he worked with the Louisiana delegation and Congressional leadership to waive the 10 percent local match requirement for disaster recovery projects and allow federal Community Disaster Loans to be forgiven for localities that can not afford to repay them.

Under the federal Robert T. Stafford Act, public assistance projects like those announced

today required a 10 percent cost share from local governments upfront before the remaining 90 percent in federal grant money can be used. Many of the estimated 23,000 disaster recovery projects in Louisiana had been put on hold because local governments did not have the resources to provide the match. The local match requirement has been waived 32 times since 1985 when per capita rebuilding costs have been deemed excessive, but had not yet been waived for Katrina and Rita.

Rep. Melancon worked with House leadership to include the waiver of the 10% match in the Iraq/Katrina Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, which was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President at the end of May. This bill provides a total of \$6.419 billion in hurricane recovery and relief funding for Louisiana and other Gulf Coast states.

In addition, Rep. Melancon successfully lobbied House leadership to include language in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill making Katrina- and Rita-affected communities eligible for forgiveness of their Community Disaster Loans. An estimated \$1 billion in CDLs were provided by the federal government to hurricane-affected local governments immediately following Katrina and Rita to help them continue daily operations, such as payroll for law enforcement and emergency responders. Many local governments do not have the ability to repay this massive debt, as their tax bases were devastated by the storms. Rep. Melancon argued that, in the past, CDLs have been forgiven following many other major disasters, including Hurricane Andrew and the September 11th terrorist attacks. With the passage of the Supplemental, Katrina and Rita CDLs became eligible for forgiveness, taking a huge financial burden off of local governments in south Louisiana.

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